

A Collective Agreement

- This agreement between the University of Sunderland and the University and College Union ends the trade dispute announced by UCU in May 2025. The dispute centred on a new process over Lecturer to Senior Lecturer progression.
- The agreement should be seen in the context of the processes that were communicated to academic staff on 29 April 2025.

1. Opportunities for progression for Lecturers

- a) When a current SL post becomes vacant (through retirement, resignation or an exit from the University) that post will normally automatically be advertised internally in the first instance.
- b) The only exceptions to this would be where the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor has determined that there is a clear and justifiable rationale for simultaneous internal and external advertisement.
- c) Such a rationale would be limited to:
 - i. Where the required skills, experience or expertise are known to be unavailable internally.
 - ii. Where a particular specialism or qualification is needed that does not exist internally.
 - iii. Where there is another compelling business or academic reason.
 - iv. Where there is a clear and justifiable rationale (approved by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor).
- d) The University will be open and transparent about this approach and will engage with UCU on any queries raised, without delaying recruitment processes.

Rationale

The new process in the University prevents automatic progression from L to SL. The above (1.) tackles that issue of contention and encourages all to ensure that there is adequate development of the existing pool of Lecturers and maximises the possibility of progression opportunities.

2. Leadership and development opportunities in a Faculty for Lecturers

- a) Both parties agree on the importance of ensuring that Lecturers have fair and visible access to development opportunities that enable them to build the skills and experience required for progression. Opportunities will continue to be promoted through multiple channels, including online systems and the Employee Self Service

platform, with colleagues encouraged to register their interest. Pro Vice-Chancellors, HR Business Partners and line managers will work together to ensure that up-to-date information on development opportunities is consistently shared and supports meaningful performance and development conversations.

Rationale

This avoids any accusation of nepotism/favouritism/etc and ensures that there are opportunities provided to all Lecturers within a Faculty, rather than just to some.

3. Operating at Senior Lecturer grade

- a) When a Lecturer has been required to undertake tasks which they consider are over and above their Job Description and pay grade, an assessment will be made to determine whether these are developmental or ongoing. Where duties are required on an ongoing basis and are aligned to the Senior Lecturer role, colleagues will be eligible to use University processes to apply for a re-grade to a Senior Lecturer.

Rationale

If there is an ongoing requirement by managers in a faculty for certain tasks to be performed by an individual which are more in line with expectations of a Senior Lecturer, this would allow for Lecturers to request to be re-graded to the SL grade.

4. Monitoring and Review of this and the L-SL process

- a) Ongoing monitoring and dialogue will remain an important part of this work. Lecturer–Senior Lecturer arrangements will continue to be considered through the Academic Staff Negotiating Panel (ASNP) as part of the normal cycle of engagement, with both parties working together to agree appropriate information to support informed and meaningful discussion. To support this, the University will provide data on Lecturer and Senior Lecturer roles by Faculty, including grade-point information, when requested.

Rationale

This allows all sides to properly review the matters that are currently of concern to UCU members in both Lecturer and Senior Lecturer grades and will allow continuous improvement of the process and the role profiles, where necessary.

SIGNATURES OF AGREEMENT TO THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT

On behalf of the University and College Union

Signed: 

Name: Jon Bryan

Title: Regional Support Official

Date: 18/08/26

On behalf of the University of Sunderland

Signed:



Name: Professor Helen Driscoll

Title: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Date: 19/08/26
